

FAFNISMOL

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THE BALLAD OF FAFNIR

Sigurth and Regin went up to the Gnitaeith, and found there the track that Fafnir made when he crawled to water. Then Sigurth made a great trench across the path, and took his place therein. When Fafnir crawled from his gold, he blew out venom, and it ran down from above on Sigurth's head. But when Fafnir crawled over the trench, then Sigurth thrust his sword into his body to the heart. Fafnir writhed and struck out with his head and tail. Sigurth leaped from the trench, and each looked at the other. Fafnir said:

1. "Youth, oh, youth! | of whom then, youth, art thou born? Say whose son thou art, Who in Fafnir's blood | thy bright blade reddened, And struck thy sword to my heart."

Sigurth concealed his name because it was believed in olden times that the word of a dying man might have great power if he cursed his foe by his name. He said:

2. "The Noble Hart | my name, and I go A motherless man abroad; Father I had not, | as others have, And lonely ever I live."

Fafnir spake:

3. "If father thou hadst not, | as others have, By what wonder wast thou born? (Though thy name on the day | of my death thou hidest, Thou knowest now thou dost lie.)"

Sigurth spake:

4. "My race, methinks, | is unknown to thee, And so am I myself; Sigurth my name, | and Sigmund's son, Who smote thee thus with the sword."

Fafnir spake:

5. "Who drove thee on? | why wert thou driven My life to make me lose? A father brave | had the bright-eyed youth, For bold in boyhood thou art."

Sigurth spake:

6. "My heart did drive me, | my hand fulfilled, And my shining sword so sharp; Few are keen | when old age comes, Who timid in boyhood be."

Fafnir spake:

7. "If thou mightest grow | thy friends among, One might see thee fiercely fight; But bound thou art, | and in battle taken, And to fear are prisoners prone."

Sigurth spake:

8. "Thou blamest me, Fafnir, | that I see from afar The wealth that my father's was; Not bound am I, | though in battle taken, Thou hast found that free I live."

Fafnir spake:

9. "In all I say | dost thou hatred see, Yet truth alone do I tell; The sounding gold, | the glow-red wealth, And the rings thy bane shall be."

Sigurth spake:

10. "Some one the hoard | shall ever hold, Till the destined day shall come; For a time there is | when every man Shall journey hence to hell."

Fafnir spake:

11. "The fate of the Norns | before the headland Thou findest, and doom of a fool; In the water shalt drown | if thou row 'gainst the wind, All danger is near to death."

Sigurth spake:

12. "Tell me then, Fafnir, | for wise thou art famed, And much thou knowest now: Who are the Norns | who are helpful in need, And the babe from the mother bring?"

Fafnir spake:

13. "Of many births | the Norns must be, Nor one in race they were; Some to gods, others | to elves are kin, And Dvalin's daughters some."

Sigurth spake:

14. "Tell me then, Fafnir, | for wise thou art famed, And much thou knowest now: How call they the isle | where all the gods And Surt shall sword-sweat mingle?"

Fafnir spake:

15. "Oskopnir is it, | where all the gods Shall seek the play of swords; Bilrost breaks | when they cross the bridge, And the steeds shall swim in the flood.
16. "The fear-helm I wore | to afright mankind, While guarding my gold I lay; Mightier seemed I | than any man, For a fiercer never I found."

Sigurth spake:

17. "The fear-helm surely | no man shields When he faces a valiant foe; Oft one finds, | when the foe he meets, That he is not the bravest of all."

Fafnir spake:

18. "Venom I breathed | when bright I lay By the hoard my father had; (There was none so mighty | as dared to meet me, And weapons nor wiles I feared.)"

Sigurth spake:

19. "Glittering worm, | thy hissing was great, And hard didst show thy heart; But hatred more | have the sons of men For him who owns the helm."

Fafnir spake:

20. "I counsel thee, Sigurth, | heed my speech, And ride thou homeward hence; The sounding gold, | the glow-red wealth, And the rings thy bane shall be."

Sigurth spake:

21. "Thy counsel is given, | but go I shall To the gold in the heather hidden; And, Fafnir, thou | with death dost fight, Lying where Hel shall have thee."

Fafnir spake:

22. "Regin betrayed me, | and thee will betray, Us both to death will he bring; His life, methinks, | must Fafnir lose, For the mightier man wast thou."

Regin had gone to a distance while Sigurth fought Fafnir, and came back while Sigurth was wiping the blood from his sword. Regin said:

23. "Hail to thee, Sigurth! | Thou victory hast, And Fafnir in fight hast slain; Of all the men | who tread the earth, Most fearless art thou, methinks."

Sigurth spake:

24. "Unknown it is, | when all are together, (The sons of the glorious gods,) Who bravest born shall seem; Some are valiant | who redden no sword In the blood of a foeman's breast."

Regin spake:

25. "Glad art thou, Sigurth, | of battle gained, As Gram with grass thou cleanseest; My brother fierce | in fight hast slain, And somewhat I did myself."

Sigurth spake:

26. "Afar didst thou go | while Fafnir reddened With his blood my blade so keen; With the might of the dragon | my strength I matched, While thou in the heather didst hide."

Regin spake:

27. "Longer wouldst thou | in the heather have let Yon hoary giant hide, Had the weapon
availed not | that once I forged, The keen-edged blade thou didst bear."

Sigurth spake:

28. "Better is heart | than a mighty blade For him who shall fiercely fight; The brave man well
| shall fight and win, Though dull his blade may be.
29. "Brave men better | than cowards be, When the clash of battle comes; And better the glad
| than the gloomy man Shall face what before him lies.
30. "Thy rede it was | that I should ride Hither o'er mountains high; The glittering worm |
would have wealth and life If thou hadst not mocked at my might."

Then Regin went up to Fafnir and cut out his heart with his sword, that was named Rithil, and then he drank blood from the wounds. Regin said:

31. "Sit now, Sigurth, | for sleep will I, Hold Fafnir's heart to the fire; For all his heart | shall
eaten be, Since deep of blood I have drunk."

Sigurth took Fafnir's heart and cooked it on a spit. When he thought that it was fully cooked, and the blood foamed out of the heart, then he tried it with his finger to see whether it was fully cooked. He burned his finger, and put it in his mouth. But when Fafnir's heart's-blood came on his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. He heard nut-hatches chattering in the thickets. A nut-hatch said:

32. "There sits Sigurth, | sprinkled with blood, And Fafnir's heart | with fire he cooks; Wise
were the breaker | of rings, I ween, To eat the life-muscles | all so bright."

A second spake:

33. "There Regin lies, | and plans he lays The youth to betray | who trusts him well; Lying
words | with wiles will he speak, Till his brother the maker | of mischief avenges."

A third spake:

34. "Less by a head | let the chatterer hoary Go from here to hell; Then all of the wealth | he
alone can wield, The gold that Fafnir guarded."

A fourth spake:

35. "Wise would he seem | if so he would heed The counsel good | we sisters give; Thought he
would give, | and the ravens gladden, There is ever a wolf | where his ears I spy."

A fifth spake:

36. "Less wise must be | the tree of battle Than to me would seem | the leader of men, If forth he lets | one brother fare, When he of the other | the slayer is."

A sixth spake:

37. "Most foolish he seems | if he shall spare His foe, the bane of the folk; There Regin lies, | who hath wronged him so, Yet falsehood knows he not."

A seventh spake:

38. "Let the head from the frost-cold | giant be hewed, And let him of rings be robbed; Then all the wealth | which Fafnir's was Shall belong to thee alone."

Sigurth spake:

39. "Not so rich a fate | shall Regin have As the tale of my death to tell; For soon the brothers | both shall die, And hence to hell shall go."

Sigurth hewed off Regin's head, and then he ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both Regin and Fafnir. Then Sigurth heard what the nut-hatch said:

40. "Bind, Sigurth, the golden | rings together, Not kingly is it | aught to fear; I know a maid, | there is none so fair, Rich in gold, | if thou mightest get her.

41. "Green the paths | that to Gjuki lead, And his fate the way | to the wanderer shows; The doughty king | a daughter has, That thou as a bride | mayst, Sigurth, buy."

Another spake:

42. "A hall stands high | on Hindarfjoll, All with flame | is it ringed without; Warriors wise | did make it once Out of the flaming | light of the flood.

43. "On the mountain sleeps | a battle-maid, And about her plays | the bane of the wood; Ygg with the thorn | hath smitten her thus, For she felled the fighter | he fain would save.

44. "There mayst thou behold | the maiden helmed, Who forth on Vingskornir | rode from the fight; The victory-bringer | her sleep shall break not, Thou heroes' son, | so the Norns have set."

Sigurth rode along Fafnir's trail to his lair, and found it open. The gate-posts were of iron, and the gates; of iron, too, were all the beams in the house, which was dug down into the earth. There Sigurth found a mighty store of gold, and he filled two chests full thereof; he took the fear-helm and a golden mail-coat and the sword Hrotti, and many other precious things, and loaded Grani with them, but the horse would not go forward until Sigurth mounted on his back.

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